

Minutes of the Special Joint Meeting of the Belmont City Council and Belmont Planning Commission of January 17, 2012
One Twin Pines Lane, City Council Chambers

CALL TO ORDER 7:00 P.M.

ROLL CALL

COUNCILMEMBERS PRESENT: Feierbach, Wozniak, Braunstein

COUNCILMEMBERS ABSENT: Warden, Lieberman

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: D'Souza, Mayer, Mercer, Reed, Horton

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Parsons, Wheeler

Staff Present: City Manager Scoles, City Attorney Rennie, Community Development Director de Melo, Public Works Director Oskoui, Police Captain DeSmidt, City Clerk Cook

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Led by Police Captain DeSmidt

ADDITIONAL BUSINESS

Joint Study Session to Review the Introduction Chapter of the 2030 General Plan Update

Community Development Director de Melo stated that the need to update the General Plan has been discussed for some time, since it was last updated in 1982. He explained that some elements of the General Plan have been updated from time to time since then, with the exception of the circulation and land use elements. He stated that an environmental study will be required. He commented that a general plan should be forward-thinking, flexible, and provide the framework for future development.

Alison Knapp Wollam, General Plan Consultant, stated that a general plan is a visionary document. She suggested showcasing the accomplishments completed under the existing General Plan, such as addressing sustainability, the downtown, the San Juan Hills Area Plan, and the Open Space Plan. She explained that the General Plan Introduction covers the seven areas mandated by State law, and that other elements can be added, if desired. She noted that a revised General Plan will help with grant applications. She stated that the redevelopment issue is an unknown. She recommended extending the expiration date for the next General Plan from 2030 to 2035.

Jeffrey Selman, Belmont resident, stated that Belmont's Vision Statement is overlooked, especially the area related to schools. He noted that the student population is growing, and he expressed concerns regarding the ability to sustain the community for students who will be future leaders. He noted that the General Plan has a direct impact on schools, and there is a need to grow the property tax base.

In response to Commissioner Mercer, Consultant Knapp Wollam clarified that anticipated growth is required to be addressed in the General Plan, and the Village Area zoning component will address density, commercial square footage, and the number of rooms in hotels. She explained that schools are addressed in the public services/facilities element.

Commissioner D'Souza stated that the General Plan Introduction should be four to five pages only, outlining goals and guiding principles. He suggested that the list of accomplishments be included as an appendix, and that the mission statement should address housing.

Councilmember Wozniak stated that the 2003 Vision Statement needs to be evaluated to determine its relevance to current residents, as demographics have changed. She commented that too much information is included in the Introduction, and no policies should be included. She suggested addressing how to maintain Belmont's character without isolation from other cities. She stated that a marketing document should be different from the General Plan.

Commissioner Mercer noted that the Vision Statement process was participatory and lengthy, and she does not support reinventing the process for subtle nuances. She expressed support for highlighting accomplishments, but noted that 47 pages are too many for an Introduction, and the document should not anticipate policy. She noted that sustainability is important but is not the main focus, and that the accomplishments outlined in the area of sustainability are exaggerated. She concurred that the accomplishments could be an appendix.

Councilmember Feierbach concurred with Commissioners Mercer and D'Souza regarding the length of the document. She stated that the loss of redevelopment needs to be addressed.

Commission Chair Reed concurred regarding the length of the document, and questioned the appropriateness of comparing the City of Belmont to a European village.

Commissioner Horton expressed support for highlighting economic development desires, and concurred with the need to condense the document. She commented that there is a need to address the affect on Belmont of developments in surrounding cities. She also expressed support for highlighting accomplishments.

Councilmember Braunstein noted that care should be exercised regarding assumptions on who will be using this document, since it will be used by both internal and external customers. He expressed concern that it not be too short, as it will likely be used for the pursuit of grants. He is also concerned regarding how to address the redevelopment issue.

Community Development Director de Melo confirmed that the approach to the update of the General Plan will be affected by the pending dissolution of the redevelopment agency.

Commissioner Mayer said that the proposed introduction is more like a public relations document than a General Plan. He does not support the European village concept. He concurred that it is too long and the elements need to be reorganized. He stated that area plans are usually independent documents. He stated that the Vision Statement does not belong in the General Plan, and added that he does not support the Vision Statement.

Consultant Knapp Wollam explained that all General Plan Introductions usually outline accomplishments. She noted that no policies are contained in the Introduction, and will be included in specific elements of the General Plan.

Commissioner Mercer noted that the document contains policy statements concerning the east side of town and the Village Center, which should instead be part of the land use element.

In response to Commission Chair Reed's inquiry regarding the inclusion of the Harbor Industrial Area (HIA), Community Development Director de Melo clarified that the HIA is within the City of Belmont's sphere of influence and could be annexed some day. He noted that the Introduction, which provides a framework, will be amended after the individual elements are addressed.

Community Development Director de Melo described the aggressive timeline for the General Plan Update.

Commissioner Mercer expressed her appreciation for Consultant Knapp Wollam's writing style and noted that it was complimentary to the City of Belmont. She expressed concern as to the amount of time that will be required to revise the document.

Commissioner Horton recommended working on specific elements at this time rather than rewriting the Introduction.

Commissioner D'Souza concurred, and noted that public input is needed.

Commission Chair Reed expressed concern regarding the use of a subcommittee for this process.

Councilmember Feierbach concurred, and noted that she does not support the use of subcommittees.

Discussion ensued regarding next steps and the scheduling of a future joint meeting.

ADJOURNMENT at this time, being 8:07 P.M.

Terri Cook
City Clerk